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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [BU](#)
SUBJECT: DEA ACTING ADMINISTRATOR COMMENDS US-BULGARIA
PARTNERSHIP, PUSHES ANTI-DRUG AGENDA

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Alex Karagiannis for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

DEA Acting Administrator did not have a chance to clear this cable.

¶1. (C) Summary. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Acting Administrator Michele Leonhart received the Bulgarian Medal of Valor, First Order, for her courage and service from the Bulgarian Interior Minister (MOI) Mihail Mikov on July 14. Leonhart commended Bulgarian drug enforcement authorities for their strong collaboration fighting emerging drug trafficking trends. In private meetings with MOI officials and Head of the new State Agency for National Security (DANS) Petko Sertov, Leonhart urged the Bulgarians to attack money laundering associated with drug trafficking and to strengthen reporting requirements for cash transactions. Responding to the GOB's long-held desire to have a DEA office here, Leonhart said she would push to open an office in coming years. Given Bulgaria's geographic location, the strong U.S. Bulgaria partnership, and emerging drug flow trends, Mikov said that increased DEA support to Bulgaria would be an asset to the entire region. Leonhart offered technical experts to help the MOI investigate drug money and invited Minister Mikov to visit the DEA Special Operations Center. End Summary.

¶2. (U) Acting DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart visited Bulgaria July 13-14 to receive the Bulgarian Medal of Valor, First Order, for her agency's cooperation with the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior on counter-narcotics issues. In her acceptance speech, Leonhart highlighted Bulgaria's importance in Balkan transit routes and noted that the success of the DEA-MOI partnership was particularly impressive given the lack of a DEA office in Bulgaria. In a separate, closed ceremony, Leonhart awarded DEA certificates of appreciation to three officers of the counter-organized crime group and two members of the Bulgarian Customs Agency, acknowledging their individual efforts in a tough operating environment.

¶3. (C) In private conversations, Interior Minister Mikov stressed that additional cooperation with DEA on police operations as well as more DEA training would be extremely helpful to the region. He explained he is trying to build his ministry's capacity and integrate its resources with the newly established State Agency for National Security (DANS). Leonhart pushed the Bulgarians to do more to follow drug traffickers' money and strengthen reporting requirements on cash transactions. Bulgarian law requires reporting of cash transactions over 30,000 leva, but the reporting form does not specify the amount. Leonhart said closure of this loophole is necessary to help inspectors identify suspicious transactions. She explained that by requiring every DEA agent to reverse engineer their drug cases and follow the

money, DEA seized \$3.5 billion in 2007 and expects to seize \$4 billion in 2008. Leonhart and Assistant Administrator Michael Braun, who received the Bulgarian Medal of Valor, Second Order, both stressed that criminals had to be brought to justice, and urged the Bulgarians to measure their success not just in kilos or tons confiscated but in convictions.

¶4. (C) Leonhart offered to send DEA financial experts to Bulgaria to show GOB drug authorities how the DEA follows the money trail. Leonhart also invited Mikov to visit the DEA Special Operations Center to see how the DEA coordinates cases across agencies, and with local and federal authorities. Mikov eagerly accepted both offers.

¶5. (C) Comment. As we work to assist the Bulgarian government undertake MOI reform, the DEA Acting Administrator's timely visit helped highlight the need for greater emphasis on financial investigations to bring down criminal structures. The delegation's emphasis on the need for strong results, including successful convictions, was helpful to advancing our agenda. We plan to reinforce Leonhart's message to the Bulgarians as we advise them on MOI reform and in our advocacy to strengthen financial reporting requirements. End Comment.
Karagiannis